

storm surges, and accompanying losses of human life and property;

Whereas the scientific community has long established that coral reefs are subject to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic threats;

Whereas a wide variety of destructive fishing practices, including the use of cyanide, other poisons, surfactants, and explosives, are contributing to the global decline of coral reef ecosystems;

Whereas the United States has taken measures to protect national coral reef resources through the designation and management of several marine protected areas, containing reefs of the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida Keys in south Florida, and offshore Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa;

Whereas the United States, acting through its agencies, has established itself as a global leader in coral reef stewardship by launching the International Coral Reef Initiative and by maintaining professional networks for the purposes of sharing knowledge and information on coral reefs, furnishing near real-time data collected at coral reef sites, providing a repository for historical data relating to coral reefs, and making substantial contributions to the general fund of coral reef knowledge; and

Whereas 1997 has been declared the "International Year of the Reef" by the coral reef research community and over 40 national and international scientific, conservation, and academic organizations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

That the Congress recognizes the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, by—

[(1) promoting comprehensive stewardship for coral reef ecosystems;

[(2) encouraging research, monitoring, and assessment of and education on coral reef ecosystems; and

[(3) improving the coordination of coral reef efforts and activities of Federal agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and industry.] That the Congress recognizes the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, by—

(1) promoting comprehensive stewardship for coral reef ecosystems;

(2) discouraging unsustainable fisheries or other practices that are harmful to coral reefs and human health;

(3) encouraging research, monitoring, and assessment of and education on coral reef ecosystems;

(4) improving the coordination of coral reef efforts and activities of Federal agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and industry; and

(5) promoting preservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I am pleased to rise today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 8. The United States is beginning to take steps to maintain and protect our coral reef ecosystems. This resolution encourages us to continue to improve our stewardship of these treasures in the sea. Coral reefs are among the most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats. They occur throughout the world's tropical and subtropical regions and in the waters of two U.S. states, including my home state of Hawaii.

Mr. President, coral reefs are vital to coastal economies, serving as the basis for coastal and marine tourism in several U.S. states and territories. Reefs also make substantial economic con-

tributions by supporting subsistence and commercial reef fisheries. Coral reefs and the ecosystems they support are under increasing pressure, primarily from human activity. Of approximately 600,000 square kilometers of coral reefs worldwide, estimates are that 10 percent have been degraded beyond recovery and an additional 30 percent are likely to decline significantly within the next 20 years.

We must strengthen our commitment to be stewards of coral reefs, to discourage harmful fisheries and other practices, to monitor and assess the health of these unique systems; and improve research of and education about coral reef ecosystems. Further, we must ensure that we balance preservation with sustainable use of our coral reef resources. We must identify factors contributing to the global decline of coral reef ecosystems and discourage overfishing and other practices that are harmful to coral reefs and human health.

It is significant that this resolution is passed during the International Year of the Reef to focus attention on research and public awareness of coral reef issues. The resolution is an important step to promote preservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide. I appreciate the help of other Senators who have worked to see that our coral reefs are provided the attention that they deserve.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee amendment to the concurrent resolution be agreed to; that the concurrent resolution, as amended, be agreed to; that the amendment to the preamble be agreed to; and that the preamble, as amended, be agreed to. I further ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the resolution appear at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee amendment was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 8), as amended, was agreed to.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

MEASURE DISCHARGED AND REFERRED—S. 813

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 813 and that the bill be referred to the Judiciary Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of the

following bills, en bloc: S. 587, S. 588, S. 589, and S. 591. I ask unanimous consent that any committee amendments be agreed to; that the bills be read a third time and passed; that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table; and that any statements relating to the bills appear at the appropriate place in the RECORD, with the above occurring en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HINSDALE COUNTY LANDS EXCHANGE ACT

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 587) to require the Secretary of the Interior to exchange certain lands located in Hinsdale County, Colorado, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. LARSON AND FRIENDS CREEK EXCHANGE.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—In exchange for conveyance to the United States of an equal value of offered land acceptable to the Secretary of the Interior that lies within, or in proximity to, the Handies Peak Wilderness Study Area, the Red Cloud Peak Wilderness Study Area, or the Alpine Loop Backcountry Bi-way, in Hinsdale County, Colorado, the Secretary of the Interior shall convey to Lake City Ranches, Ltd., a Texas limited partnership (referred to in this section as "LCR"), approximately 560 acres of selected land located in that county and generally depicted on a map entitled "Larson and Friends Creek Exchange", dated June 1996.

(b) *CONTINGENCY.*—The exchange under subsection (a) shall be contingent on the granting by LCR to the Secretary of a permanent conservation easement, on the approximately 440-acre Larson Creek portion of the selected land (as depicted on the map), that limits future use of the land to agricultural, wildlife, recreational, or open space purposes.

(c) APPRAISAL AND EQUALIZATION.—

(1) *IN GENERAL.*—The exchange under subsection (a) shall be subject to—

(A) the appraisal requirements and equalization payment limitations set forth in section 206 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1716); and

(B) reviews and approvals relating to threatened species and endangered species, cultural and historic resources, and hazardous materials under other Federal laws.

(2) *COSTS OF APPRAISAL AND REVIEW.*—The costs of appraisals and reviews shall be paid by LCR.

(3) *CREDITING.*—The Secretary may credit payments under paragraph (2) against the value of the selected land, if appropriate, under section 206(f) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1716(f)).

The committee amendment was agreed to.

The bill (S. 587), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

EAGLES NEST WILDERNESS EXPANSION ACT

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 588) to provide for the expansion of the Eagles Nest Wilderness within the Arapaho National Forest and the White River National Forest, Colorado, to include land known as the Slate